

Hobbies

U.S. goes for the silver with Olympic commemoratives

By Roger Boye

The new year may shine brightly for coin buffs, thanks in part to Uncle Sam. Here's what to watch for in 1992.

● Three coins to commemorate U.S. participation in the 1992 Olympics. Officials have yet to announce prices or ordering details, but don't be surprised if a "pre-issue sale" begins in February, when the Winter Games are under way.

This is the government's 11th commemorative coin program since 1982, the only one that has used an open, national competition to develop coin designs.

● Silver proof sets. Thanks to a little-noticed law enacted last year, the U.S. Mint will resurrect silver proof sets in 1992. Each five-coin set will hold a dime, quarter and half dollar made of 90 percent silver and 10 percent copper.

A sale in the first half of the



One of three coins commemorating U.S. Olympic participation.

year seems likely; such sets were last issued in 1964.

● Regular (non-silver) proof and uncirculated coin sets. Mint workers will continue to make the traditional five-coin proof sets and 10-coin uncirculated sets next year. The 1991 versions went on sale in May, with the proof sets costing \$11 and the uncirculated sets, \$7.

● American Eagle gold and sil-

ver coins. These popular bullion programs begin their sixth full year in 1992 with one major change. The gold coins will bear Arabic numeral dates rather than Roman numerals, a switch that's designed to make the year "easier to read and more attractive for gift-giving," according to the U.S. Treasury.

Meanwhile, the government will continue next year to sell proof

specimens of American Eagles to collectors.

● Korean War and United Service Organizations silver dollars. Sales of these 1991-dated commemoratives will continue during part of the new year as officials try to sell all of the coins they are authorized to make. Some of Uncle Sam's profits will go for a Korean War memorial to be built in Washington.

● \$50 bills with enhanced anti-counterfeiting devices. Earlier this year, new \$100 Federal Reserve notes made their debut following widespread publicity. The first of the revised \$50s should be released in 1992 with revised \$20 bills expected to follow by 1993.

Each new bill features micro-printing around the center portrait and a polyester thread embedded into the paper, additions

expected to make greenbacks more difficult to duplicate accurately on color copiers.

Also in 1992, lawmakers in Washington will have at least a score of coinage proposals to consider, including bills that would force the government to put new designs on circulating coins and to issue a circulating "round dollar" while eliminating the \$1 bill.

Subjects to be honored on proposed commemorative coinage range from fire fighting and Benjamin Franklin to the 200th anniversary of the laying of the White House cornerstone.

For more information on government coin programs, write to the United States Mint, 10001 Aerospace Drive, Lanham, Md. 20706, or call (301) 436-7400.